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AUTHOR Fier, Harriet, Ed.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This user guide covers "Teaching in a Multicultural Society," one part of the 12-unit series "My America: Building a Democracy." The focus of the guide is to raise a generation of children who appreciate the value of a wide range of human experience including those distinctly different from their own. Goals of this program are to help children become familiar with the democratic process and active citizenship; recognize what it means to be an active citizen in a multicultural society; build skills in communications and cooperation; recognize how laws are made and how a single vote and voice matter; and experience how caring and commitment build community. Suggestions for using the videotape, "Teaching in a Multicultural Society," as well as before and after viewing activities are offered. Contains an 11-item bibliography. (JAG)

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ED 404 248

My America
Building a Democracy

Teaching in a Multicultural Society

User's Guide For K-8 Educators

SO 026 540

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My America
Building a Democracy

Teaching in a Multicultural Society

For K-8 Educators

"Without schools, there can be no citizens. Not just the future, but the future of democracy rests on how well we educate the young. There is only one road to democracy: education."

—Benjamin R. Barber
Director,
Walt Whitman Center
for Culture & Politics
of Democracy,
Rutgers University, NJ

Educational objective

To raise a generation of children who appreciate the value of a wide range of human experience including those distinctly different from their own.

Video preview

America is a brilliant mix of ethnic and cultural diversity because we have always come from everywhere. This video opens with children describing the diversity of Americans. We see a wide range of educators and parents reflecting on the importance of respect for cultural traditions and languages. Fifth graders create body maps of the typical American child and vividly describe their hopes and fears. Using cooperative learning techniques, viewers experience children sharing ideas, listening and reaching decisions by consensus. Creative approaches to embracing the special needs of children and families are seen in Taos, New Mexico, in Washington, DC, and in Delavan, MN. From a principal of a Native American magnet school in Buffalo, NY, we learn why it is important to be able to hold more than one point of view in mind at the same time and about the central place fairness and respect hold in a democracy.

Suggestions for using "Teaching in a Multicultural Society"

This program has been designed to be used by individual teachers or a group and it is appropriate for the new as well as the experienced educator. Since sharing and listening are at the heart of this video and the democratic process, watching with others is highly recommended. It will work best if someone takes the initiative to preview the 20 minute video and choose the activities and discussion topics that reflect the issues alive in your school and community.

It has been created to be a catalyst for lively discussion on a wide range of current issues. Out of these discussions new ideas can emerge to help open minds and heighten sensitivity to the central role educators play in creating positive attitudes about social diversity in a democratic society. It is appropriate for use at staff meetings and in-service workshops as well as to initiate a year-round series of events tied into celebrating cultural and ethnic achievement in the arts, science and food. Even if you are not living in a multicultural community, this educational resource will increase your awareness.

"To create a condition of well-being, it begins with human beings. It begins with breaking out of the habitual logic that has governed our behavior for generations to let new perspectives and new ideas leak into the sacred canon of what we can teach in the public schools."

—Lloyd Elm, PhD
Principal,
Native American
Magnet School
Buffalo, NY

The MY AMERICA Newsletter publishes active citizenship projects and activities. Send your photos, stories, and video tapes to:

MY AMERICA Newsletter
c/o New Castle Communications, Inc.
229 King Street
Chappaqua, NY 10514

Before viewing the video

★ The American democracy is built on ideals. Each one of us treasures the right to live, to be free and to pursue happiness. The powerful words of the great documents that gave birth to our nation and defined our democracy created a framework for a new kind of government that would nourish "the greatest good for the greatest number".

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Thomas Jefferson
Declaration of Independence

"WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Preamble to the Constitution

Print out and distribute the above quotes from the MY AMERICA ■. You will find it in the Teaching in a Multicultural Society file. Ask the participants to complete the following thought which is printed on the bottom of the sheet.

"I am an American educator. I cherish my right to _____ because _____."

Allow time for people to connect with the feeling of these rights as something to be cherished and have them share their thoughts with the person next to them. Next, ask a few people to read their cherish statement to the entire group. Collect the statements and publish them in the school newsletter or create a bulletin board around them.

★ The basic theme that runs throughout MY AMERICA: Building a Democracy is: Democracy works best when everyone participates. This concept is built on the premise that everyone counts and that everyone's ideas have a right to be heard and considered. Now that the participants have reflected on their rights as democratic citizens, this next exercise will help them feel the loss of what they cherish and sometimes take for granted.

Break the participants into 3 groups. Give each group one of the following names: voice, rights or freedom. Give the groups only 10 minutes to create a skit—either real or imagined—about what it would be like to experience living without voice, without rights, and without freedom. Everyone in each group should have a role in the 3 minute skits. After each skit is performed, focus discussion on how it felt to be excluded in each situation.

After-viewing activities

★ Our democracy is built on great ideals that are sometimes difficult to live up to everyday. Fairness and respect come up often when building relationships with people who look, sound, think and eat in ways very different from our own. Ask each participant to think about a child or a parent or a colleague who comes from a cultural or ethnic background that varies from their own. Have them express their feelings about this person using the following sentence to begin:

What I really appreciate about _____ is _____.

★ Ask each of them to see how many qualities they can list about this individual that makes the relationship special. Have a few people share their respect letters with the group. Suggest that they all give the letter to the person or directly speak the feelings and see how this individual responds. This is a great exercise to keep relationships open and honest and kind between people.

★ Educators develop special strategies for dealing with diversity in the classroom. This exercise quickly gets to the essence of the issues and creates a safe place to share honestly

"Collaboration is the key to what we do. We have students, parents, and staff members sitting on committees in which decisions are made by consensus. It is that sense of ownership that begins to emerge that is so crucial to the process of change."

—Kathleen Hood
Principal,
Carl Benner School,
Coatsville, PA

what has worked successfully and what has not. Break the participants into groups of three. Be sure that experienced and inexperienced teachers are in balance in each small grouping. Start the first round of story sharing with this opening statement:

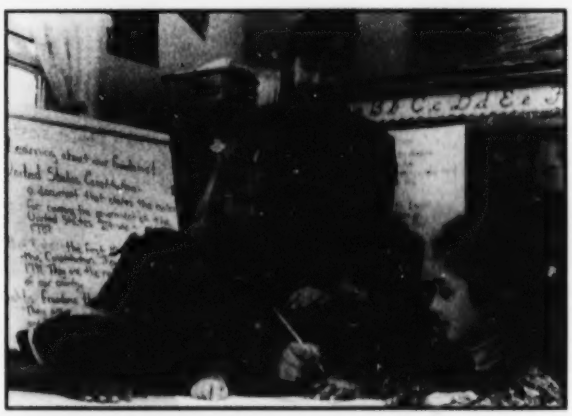
The time I thought I handled a diversity issue with great care and respect was when:

_____

★ After each person has had a turn relating in the small group, ask if anyone would like to share a successful strategy with the whole group.

Start the second round of story sharing with this opening statement:

I did not know I had this feeling about _____
until this happened _____.
What I wish I could have done differently was_____.



"Beneath the skin, beyond the differing features and into the true heart of being, fundamentally we are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike."

—Maya Angelou

See MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disk for other opportunities for opening up communications.

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My America: Building a Democracy

While the American democracy evolves through the vision and actions of every citizen, the major responsibility of keeping democracy alive in every generation lies with the American educator. MY AMERICA: Building a Democracy is the first curriculum in 25 years designed to help educators teach active citizenship through a social studies curriculum.

GOALS

The goals of these curriculum kits are to help children:

- become familiar with the democratic process and active citizenship,
- recognize what it means to be an active citizen in a multicultural society,
- build skills in communications and cooperation,
- recognize how laws are made and how a single vote and voice matter,
- experience how caring and commitment build community.

FORMAT

MY AMERICA is a 12 unit series, consisting of:

- 15-20 minute videos
- User Guides
- Resource Directory Disks (MS-DOS & MAC)

Materials were designed by educators, for educators. An interdisciplinary approach to hands-on learning is used.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

The MY AMERICA kits motivate children to participate actively in their schools and local communities, and to experience the democratic process. The series attempts to demystify the government, explain how laws are made, and show how American democracy is always evolving. MY AMERICA combines elements of traditional civics and social studies curricula with techniques and activities that encourage children to participate and become involved. **Its underlying theme is: Democracy works best when everyone participates.**

MY AMERICA teaches in the voices of children in a way that respects their intelligence and natural curiosity.

THE VIDEOS

Each tape contains on-location documentaries, animation and historical illustrations. A classroom modeling lesson encourages children to use their skills in reading, writing, listening, painting, singing and performing. The cooperative learning model is central to each video.

The videos are developed within the following framework:

Kid View: Children give thought-provoking, lively opinions on each topic.

Documentary: Historical context and current concerns are blended with examples of children making a difference in their communities. This section is rich in historical information and opens up a wide range of discovery possibilities.

Modeling Lesson: Educators and students develop an interdisciplinary activity designed to bring alive the educational objective of the video.

Wrap Up: The key concepts recapped from the diverse perspectives of both children and adults.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

THE USER GUIDES

Guides provide multiple learning experiences, lesson plans and bibliographies built around social studies and citizenship themes. Suggested activities are interdisciplinary in approach and focus on skills in communication and cooperation.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY DISKS (MS-DOS & MAC)

MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disks include black-lined master activity sheets, samples of letters to parents and organizations, petitions, proclamations and press releases—all of which can be customized. Also included are a listing of additional resources, bibliographic references for students and teachers, historical documents, and curriculum correlations.

This icon indicates that additional material is available on the MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disk.

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My America
Building a Democracy

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MY AMERICA: BUILDING A DEMOCRACY
THE USER'S GUIDE

Editor
Harriet Fier

Writer/Editor
Anne Marie Santoro

Researcher
Dahvi Waller

Art Direction
David Kaestle Inc.

Photography
Robin Bowman
Marianne Barcelona
Steve Northrup

MY AMERICA consists of the following program titles:

What is a Flag?
A Pledge is a Promise
Neighborhood and Community
Liberty and Justice
What is an American?
The Story of the National Anthem
What is a Democracy?
How Our Laws Are Made
Becoming an Active Citizen
Rights and Responsibilities

Teaching in a Multicultural Society (For Teachers)
Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together (For Parents)

ORDER 1-800-723-1263 TOLL-FREE

Other resources available when you purchase the entire multimedia series:
MY AMERICA Newsletter: published 3 times during the school year.
MY AMERICA Teacher Training Video: 10 classroom activities around civic issues.

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

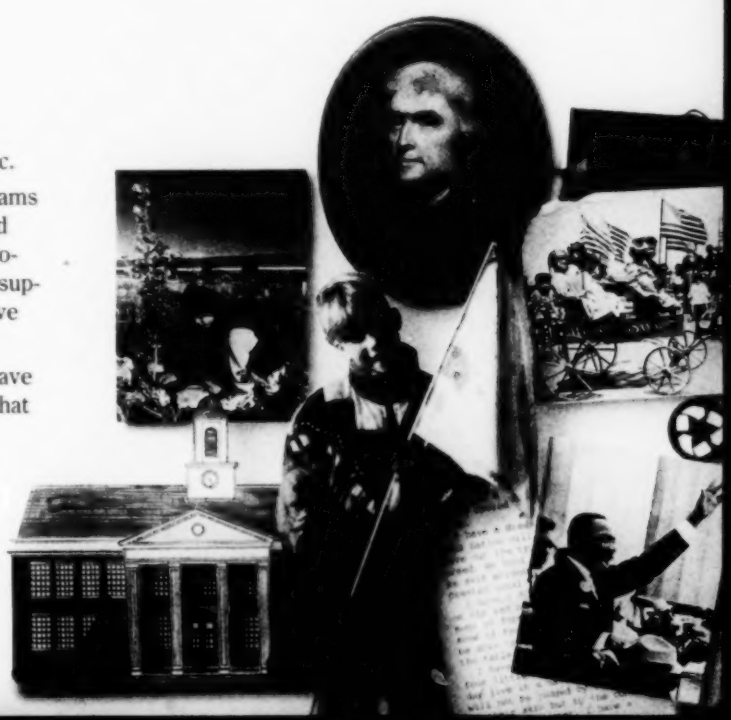
—The Great Law of the Six Nations
Iroquois Confederacy

About New Castle Communications, Inc.

MY AMERICA is published by New Castle Communications, Inc.

New Castle Communications is a publisher of educational programs that celebrate children and teachers. The company produces and distributes video, print and computer software materials that provide instruction and inspiration for elementary children. These supplemental curriculum titles foster awareness, critical and creative thinking, responsibility and active participation.

New Castle is dedicated to helping children learn the skills to have a positive impact on the world around them and to understand that their actions can and do make a difference.



NEW CASTLE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
229 King Street, Chappaqua, NY 10514 800-723-1263 Fax: 914-238-8445